

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6449

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: GOP ANNOUNCES NEXT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: FOLLOWING IS FULL TEXT OF
ARTICLE APPEARING ON FRONT PAGE OF AFTERNOON SPANISH-LANGUAGE
"EL PANAMA AMERICA" FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21: BEGIN QUOTE:
HEADLINE (4 COLUMN): BUNKER ANNOUNCES RETURN TO PANAMA WITH
PRACTICAL AND SPECIFIC MATERIAL. TEXT:

FOREIGN MINSITRY SOURCES ANNOUNCED THIS MORNING TO ONE OF
OUR EDITORS THAT THE RETURN OF UNITED STATES SPECIAL
AMBASSADOR ELLSWORTH BUNKER TO THIS COUNTRY IS IMMINENT.
AMBASSADOR BUNKER IS IN CHARGE OF THE UNITED STATES SIDE
OF THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE ABROGATION OF THE 1903 TREATY.

"AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S RETURN TO OUR COUNTRY HAS BEEN
INTERPRETED BY VARIOUS SOURCES TO MEAN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF
SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS WHICH SOME OF THE POSITIONS PRESENTED
BY THE PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATORS AND THE GOVERNMENT OF
PANAMA HAD PRESENTED TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.

AS WILL BE RECALLED AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS LAST
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VISIT, GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS, CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT, SENT

AMBASSADOR BUNKER A MESSAGE TO THE EFFECT THAT HE (BUNKER) NOT RETURN TO PANAMA WITHOUT SPECIFIC DEFINITIONS OF THE POINTS STILL UNRESOLVED UP TO THAT TIME IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IN ROLDANILLO, COLOMBIA, WHERE HE IS ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT SINCE MONDAY, GENERAL TORRIJOS SAID THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE FIXING OF A NEW STATUS FOR THE UNITED STATES PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ARE NEARER AGREEMENT NOW THAN BEFORE. END QUOTE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. COMMENT: MEMBERS OF TORRIJOS' OPPOSITION IN ALL TALKS WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS RECENTLY HAVE REPEATED CHARGES THAT THE UNITED STATES IS POLITICALLY SUPPORTING THE TORRIJOS REGIME. THE ARTICLE WITH A MISLEADING HEADLINE SAYING THAT AMBASSADOR BUNKER HAS ANNOUNCED HE WILL RETURN TO PANAMA SOON WILL APPEAR TO BE FURTHER EVIDENCE OF U.S. SUPPORT. TORRIJOS, MOREOVER, CAN CLAIM A VICTORY INASMUCH AS THE ARTICLE SPECULATES THAT HIS ALLEGED ADMONITION TO BUNKER AT CONCLUSION OF THE LAST VISIT HERE HAS BORNE FRUIT IN THE FORM OF NEW UNITED STATES PROPOSALS. IT WILL ALSO AROUSE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS THAT OUTSTANDING ISSUES WILL BE RESOLVED DURING THE NEXT NEGOTIATING ROUND. WE CAN EXPECT INTENSE PRESSURES IN PANAMA FOR SOME SORT OF PROGRESS REPORT BEFORE THE U.S. NEGOTIATING TEAM DEPARTS FROM PANAMA. THE ARTICLE, HOWEVER, WILL BE OF IMMEDIATE HELP TO TORRIJOS IN UNDERCUTTING HIS POLITICAL OPPONENTS. END COMMENT. END LOU. JORDEN

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